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COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 21, 2011

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Protections for GI Bill Students and Veteran Home Loans Advance to Full Committee

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today, the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity favorably reported seven bills to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. The bills are expected to be taken up in the full Committee in the near future.

Amendments to both H.R. 2301 and H.R. 2274 would make further changes to strengthen the Post-9/11 GI Bill of 2010, keeping the needs of the veteran first.

“The Post-9/11 GI Bill is a great benefit program for veterans, but it is extremely difficult to administer, often requiring multiple transactions between the Department of Veterans Affairs and each school,” stated Representative Marlin Stutzman (IN-03), Subcommittee Chairman on Economic Opportunity. “Through H.R. 2301, we are trying to simplify and streamline the process by delaying VA tuition and fees payments to the schools for a very short period. By reducing the number of payment transactions, VA employees will have more time to process veterans' education claims as well as allow student's flexibility to drop and add classes early in the semester.”

“In addition, we need to know that the Post-9/11 GI Bill is working for this generation of veterans,” said Representative Gus Bilirakis (FL-09). “As part of Congress' oversight responsibilities, we need to know how many veterans are graduating, getting degrees, and other evidence of completing courses of education and training. In short, we need to ensure that there is accountability in the system and that the dollars being spent to help our veterans get an education are working, and H.R. 2274 would help us to do that.”

Also considered at the markup was H.R. 2329, which provides financial protections for servicemembers and veterans under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA).

“It is our responsibility to ensure that our troops will be able to continue to protect and defend our country without fear of financial difficulties stemming from their service. And H.R. 2329 provides important improvements to the SCRA that will better enable them to do so,” said Representative Bill Johnson (OH-06). “*Ensuring a Response for Servicemembers* helps service members, veterans and their families by requiring financial institutions to designate a compliance officer who is responsible for ensuring that the institution is complying with the provisions of the SCRA.”

In addition, in advance of the 2012 London Paralympics, the Subcommittee also recommended reauthorizing the Department of Veterans Affairs and U.S. Paralympic partnership, which promotes participation by disabled veterans in adaptive sports programs at the grassroots level through elite competitive events such as the Paralympics.

“It is important to establish a solid base for adaptive sports to ensure that servicemembers and veterans can use the program as part of their rehabilitation program,” said Stutzman.

The seven pieces of legislation favorably reported to the full Committee are:

H.R. 2301: Streamlining Education Claims Processing Act of 2011 (introduced by Representative Stutzman)—as amended.

H.R. 2274: To amend Title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense to submit to Congress annual reports on the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Program, and for other purposes (introduced by Representative Bilirakis)—as amended.

H.R. 2302: To amend title 38, United States Code, to direct the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to notify Congress of conferences sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs (introduced by Representative Stutzman).

H.R. 2329: Ensuring a Response for Servicemembers Act (introduced by Representative Johnson).

H.R. 2345: To amend Title 38, United States Code, to extend the authorization of appropriations for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to pay a monthly assistance allowance to disabled veterans training or competing for the Paralympic Team and the authorization of appropriations for the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide assistance to United States Paralympics, Inc (introduced by Representative Stutzman).

H.R. 1263: To amend the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act to provide surviving spouses with certain protections relating to mortgages and mortgage foreclosures (introduced by Representative Filner).

H.R. 1911: Protecting Veterans' Homes Act (introduced by Representative Braley).

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